

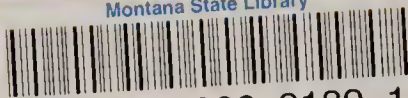
S
711.558
R10ws

STATE DOCUMENTS

◀ **WEST SHORE STATE PARK**



Montana State Library



3 0864 1006 9189 1

AREA MASTER PLAN
West Shore State Park
Lake County, Montana

for
Recreation and Parks Division
Montana Fish and Game Department

By
Thomas, Dean & Hoskins, Inc.
Great Falls, Montana

INTRODUCTION

Leisure time and outdoor recreational pursuits are becoming an ever expanding portion of man's daily life. In the years ahead there will be, by necessity, a greater financial, human, and resource commitment made in an effort to give meaning to the expanding non-productive hours of man. The role of government; local, state and federal, has become as important to outdoor recreation as to that of supplying other services. Wise investment of all resources must be carefully planned in an effort to meet the growing needs. In the haste to meet these needs and to satisfy the bare necessities, quality has often been overlooked. Well planned quality facilities are an integral part of recreation resource investment. The creation of a quality experience maximizes use and user satisfaction and in the long run will result in the most favorable cost-benefit ratio. This report presents a long-range plan for the quality development of the resource potential at West Shore State Park. It is commensurate with the needs of the area, previous public commitments, the nature of the resource and the mission of the State Park.

DESCRIPTION

West Shore State Park is located on the west shore of Flathead Lake. Flathead Lake is one of the largest natural lakes in the Pacific Northwest. Its surface acreage totals approximately 125,550 acres with over 150 miles of shoreline. The eastern portion of the lake is ringed by the Mission Mountains. The park site is situated approximately 20 miles south of Kalispell, Montana, and 33 miles north of Polson, Montana.

The topography of the site is variable from steeply sloping to slightly sloping. The central elevation of the park is 3,234 feet above sea level or 342 feet above the shores of Flathead Lake. From this central prominence the topography slopes steeply to a level of approximately 3,000 feet - then forms a slightly sloping beach approximately 100 above the level of the lake and breaks off sharply at the shores of the lake with 50 to 60 foot bluffs. The nature of the topography has been a major consideration in design development.

The chief tree species found on the site are Douglas fir and western larch. The high prominence is free of overstory and generally surrounded by brush and scattered young Douglas fir trees. The northeastern portion of the park is covered with a dense stand of young Douglas fir.

Present development consists of a small boat ramp and adjacent picnic area, and two camping areas. Recent improvements at the existing campgrounds include: improved roads, the development of individual camping spurs, an

expanded water system and increased sanitary facilities. These improvements have resulted in greater individual unit integrity which was greatly needed because of the deteriorating condition of the site brought about by indiscriminant and uncontrolled visitor use. These improved areas have been retained and integrated into the overall master plan.



View of Flathead Lake from site of proposed visitor center.



The present boat ramp. It is expected that this facility will be removed and replaced by a wider ramp with an improved approach.



At present the parking facilities at the waterfront are limited, and in general parking conflicts with traffic patterns in the area.



View of the existing picnic area adjacent to the boating area.



View of Table Bay and Miller Point from the high orientation point in the center of the park.

JUSTIFICATION

The intangible public benefits that will be realized by this plan are many. Millions of Americans enjoy the wholesome and personally rewarding experience of the out-of-doors. In practically every major outdoor recreation area in the United States attendance has risen steadily and rapidly. Increasing amounts of leisure time, income and mobility have greatly contributed to the outdoor recreation boom. If such trends as shorter work weeks and longer paid vacations continue, there will result a major impact upon the use of such outdoor recreation areas as West Shore State Park, best suited to weekend and vacation use. This region has one the highest out-of-state 'exposure indices' of the state. Kalispell with an exposure index of 38.5 can expect an out-of-state visitation of nearly 1.5 million persons in 1970. Fishermen, water sports enthusiasts, and summer tourists are attracted by the water resource. These people will be fulfilling their recreational desires. However, in the pursuit of their particular activities, they will need supporting facilities such as tenting and trailer space, boat ramps, boat docks, picnic areas, and so forth. Much of the shoreline surrounding Flathead Lake is in private ownership; development has primarily been that of summer homes. The underdeveloped public use areas have been receiving increasingly heavy summer use. It has become impossible to provide for the recreational needs of the various user groups with the existing facilities.

ELEMENTS OF THE COMPLEX

The principle users of this park will be the tourist and the activity oriented recreationist. Flathead Lake is a major water resource and attracts recreationists from far ranging localities. As boating and fishing are among the most popular activities in the area, one of the principal elements of this plan will be the inclusions of launching facilities and parking. It is quite likely that this park will become a destination point for travelers en route to Glacier National Park. It is expected that these travelers will be desirous of overnight facilities suitable for tent, trailer and pick-up camping.

The rugged beauty of the site and the extensive view of Flathead Lake and the Mission Mountains afford an excellent opportunity for the development of an interpretive system based upon the geology and ecology of the region. Nature walks, overlooks, and hiking trails will provide further enjoyment for the recreationist. The tourist is conditioned by his urban background to sanitation, convenience, mobility and intellectual curiosity. There is a desire to see, to photograph and to learn new things while vacationing. Interpretive programs will contribute to visitor satisfaction and generally create quality experiences without adding increasing pressures upon the resource. In order to establish an effective interpretive system for West Shore State Park a visitor center should be constructed to provide a focal point for various interpretive programs. The specific elements of the entire recreation complex are included in the following:

1. General natural areas and woodlands



2. Improvement of the existing boating area
3. Provisions for overnight camping
4. Provisions for picnicking
5. An interpretive center
6. Orientation points and overlooks
7. Hiking and walking trails

The area designation for each of these facilities is indicated on the area master plan. The construction and development of these facilities will be undertaken at various future dates pending the availability of financial resources.





area master plan



West Shore State Park

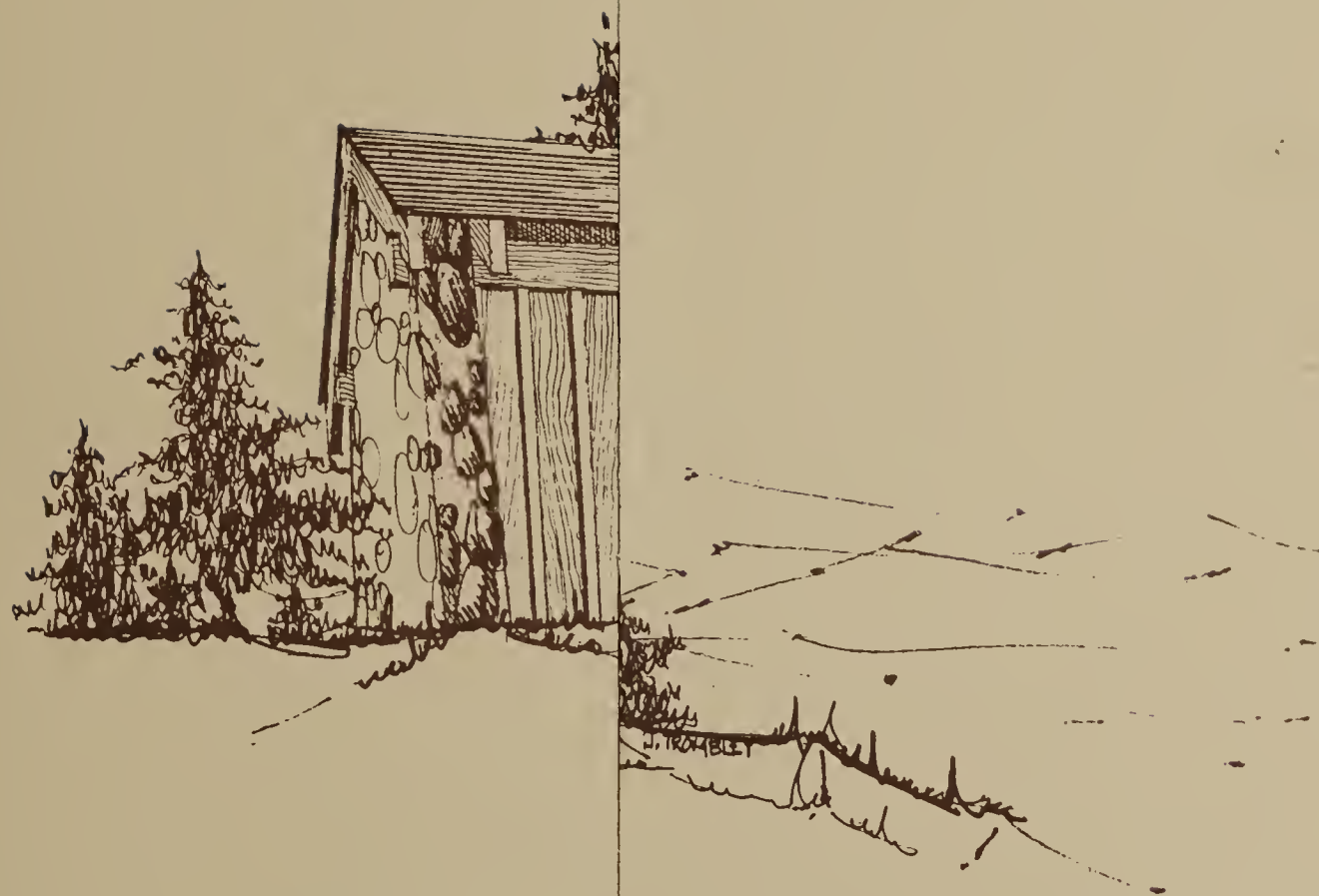




area master plan



West Shore State Park





PROPOSED VISITOR CENTER



THE PLAN

GENERAL:

The entire park area encompasses an area of approximately 150 acres. The east boundary is adjacent to Flathead Lake and the west boundary adjacent to highway 93. A total shoreline of 4,300 feet is included in the park area. The rugged terrain has been a principle design constraint, the steep shoreline limits its development potential and steep interior slopes confine the usable areas for facility development to three general areas; the gently sloping southern extreme, a central bench, and the less suitable northern panhandle.

A major consideration will be a well defined circulation route and individual spur roads to each of the major activity areas. Because of the design limitations imposed by the topography, picnicking areas have been proposed at the steeper sites which can be adequately traversed by pedestrian traffic. The more level portions of the site have been proposed for vehicle camping, and in those areas where the topography will permit tent camping, but not access roads, walk-in tent camping has been proposed. The camping areas are designated and stratified to provide for the entire spectrum of the outdoor experience. Facility development will range from elaborate provisions for individual water and electrical outlets to the bare necessities needed for sanitary control of primitive back country camps.

Boating facilities will be located at their present location. The topography places severe restrictions to the possible expansion of parking facilities at this site.

A visitor center, interpretive trail and walk-in camping will round out the proposed land use of the northern portion of the park.

The items of improvement and development are set forth in the following schedule of phase construction. It may be expected that this schedule will be subject to future revisions as a result of administrative decisions based upon political and financial considerations.

Phase I

- A. Improvement and Expansion of Campground Number One
- B. Redevelopment of the Boating Access and Parking Area

Phase II

- A. Travel Trailer Camp

Phase III

- A. Walk-in Camp Number One and Two
- B. Interpretation and Visitor Center

Phase IV

- A. Completion of Interior Drive
- B. Development of Maintenance Headquarters

Phase V

- A. Development of Picnic Area Number Two and Beach

The development of additional walking trails and scenic improvement projects will be undertaken concurrently with the above mentioned major commitments. The above mentioned developments are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Phase I

A. Improvement and Expansion of Campground Number One. Campground Number One is located in the Goose Bay drainage. Although topography seriously restricts the usable land area, this area remains as one of the most suitable for campground development. The existing developments are separated by a small drainage. The expansion of the campground will connect these two areas and provide for further development up the drainage towards the main entrance. The existing road up the drainage runs parallel a steep slope to the north and prohibits spur development in this direction. The planned road location will move the development away from this slope and provide for additional camping units. The entire area will then be interconnected and become one contiguous unit with one entrance and exit.

B. Redevelopment of the Boating Access and Parking Area. The existing facilities for boat launching and parking are inadequate and cramped. Again topography has been a major factor restricting development. The most practical method of facility expansion at this site is to revise the present unloading system. Currently it is necessary to trail the boat to the north, turn around and then return to be in position for backing onto the ramp. After unloading, it is difficult to turn to the right for parking, so most of the boat and trailer parking is done to the left which is further congested by picnickers. To reload it is necessary to repeat the procedure. The revised plan would widen the present parking area by lowering the grade and expanding slightly into the lake, and

the boat ramp would be placed at the north end. This will allow for backing on a tangent from the turnaround and separate parking facilities for car-trailer combinations and single cars.

Phase II

A. Travel Trailer Camp. The continuing pressures for camping facilities at State Parks around Flathead Lake makes it highly desirable that a new area be developed at West Shore State Park. Suitable land area for such a development is scarce. Because of the sloping character of the terrain, the trailer area has been designed to fit the contours of a gentle grade in the central portion of the park. One-way roads with individual unit pull outs will allow most units to have a down hill view towards Flathead Lake. It is expected that each individual units will be served with water and electricity. A central comfort station should be equipped with washing facilities, flush toilets and showers.

Phase III

A. Walk-in Camp Number One and Two. It may be expected that not all overnight visitors will be staying in wheeled vehicles, tent camping has always been a popular activity among recreationists. Walk-in tent camping areas have been provided in two areas. The first of these is located on a slightly sloping bench overlooking the lake. The second allows the visitor a more rugged backcountry experience in the thick timber in the northern pan-handle of the park. The first area will have brushed and graded trails, central toilet facilities, water and graded pads for individual camping units. The second area is designed for the more hardy individuals willing to walk away

from the road and who enjoy a more rustic experience. This area will have simple foot trails, wide spacing between units and primitive facilities. Individual foot trails might lead to a central "spring", artificially created to avoid the obvious modern convenience of a water hydrant.

B. Interpretation and Visitor Center. The generally accepted objective of interpretation is to provide a service to the individual. The goal is to enhance visitor satisfaction and enjoyment. The secondary objective is to have an interpretive program that contributes and promotes the management programs. The secondary benefits of good interpretive programs are motivational management and control of people distribution. Quality experiences are promoted through the recognition of and orientation toward the intellectual values. The primary concern at West Shore State Park should be the communication of ideas about the control theme of geology and ecology and the recent attempt by man at the manipulation of the biotic community which results in the disruption of the natural progression of events and consequently demonstrates the need for resource management. The increments of the story here should include: the development of visitor awareness of the natural (geologic and ecologic) forces which created the landscape and the biotic community about them; the ongoing processes which perpetuate the overall environmental picture; the recent interjections of man which has altered these processes; and the restoration of balance by resource management practices. The effective techniques best suited to relate this story are displays oriented to the ecologic and geologic evolution of the area, slide talks related to the resource management aspects

and short interpretive walks related to the vegetation and animals found in the park. The general sequence should follow that order. The central theme should be expanded and supported by outlay orientation points, trails and display information. The important point is that each of these supporting techniques relates to the central idea.

The theme concept is now developed - the next step involves the decisions concerning elements available which should be included, how much and why. This will necessitate the development of an interpretive master plan. The Interpretive Master Plan will be an instrument based upon extensive library research concerning the resource material available which best relates the story of the park features. This resource bibliography will form the background material for individual display developments. A suggested plan for the location of proposed interpretive features of West Shore State Park is presented in the following pages.

1. Main Entrance Station.

The function of the entrance station will be to collect fees, direct visitor traffic and provide information as to the available park services, what to see and the rules and regulations.

2. Waterfront Display.

The waterfront display located near the parking and sanitary facilities of the boating access should be oriented toward the fish and aquatic habit of Flathead Lake. Suggested items of interpretation include; size of fish caught in the lake, species of fish inhabiting the lake, unique features of the aquatic community, and a map of the lake showing favorite fishing locations. Supplementary information might include license information, limits and management practices.

3. Orientation Point.

Interpretive items should include orientation signs indicating various features visible from this height, interpretive displays pertaining to the following: logging in the region, historic use of Flathead Lake in the logging industry, fire and regeneration of the forest cover, and the effects of forest fire upon game habitat and the entire biotic community.

4. Visitor Center.

The visitor center will be the focal point for the interpretive programs at West Shore State Park. The visitor center must have visual appeal and by its very nature beckon the visitor inside. As a focal point of the interpretive program it is expected that some area will be reserved for interpretive displays,

but the building should also function as a center for information and orientation.

A major aid to visitor orientation would be a large model of Flathead Lake and its immediate surroundings placed in the middle of the central triangular room which affords an unobstructed view of the lake. Information should be made available concerning the local plants, geology, wildflowers, animals, insects, and history.

5. Interpretive Trail.

Visitors from local communities and travelers alike, find that nature trails or interpretive walks are most enjoyable. The trail should be approximately one-half mile long with alternatives for longer and shorter walks. The plan is to wind the trail from the visitor center to the north along a gentle grade down to the lake edge. From here the trail would follow the lake edge for a ways then go up into the thick second growth fir stand on the low bench above the lake. The trail would then wind back to the south breaking out of the fir at an area overlooking a shoreline slump; from here the trail would meander back to the parking lot at the visitor center. Interpretive displays might include the following features:

- A. Water's edge - shows transition from land to water. The effect of wave erosion, vegetation types, and the importance of shoreline and off-shore ecology.
- B. Plant succession, the current phase of forest succession, what would happen if all vegetation removed to mineral soil with examples

where possible.

- C. Game habitat, what animals eat, what they use for shelter, how they exist and compete in the forest environment, the description of the ecological balance and the influence of man.
- D. The soil, its make-up, living community in one cubic foot of soil, and its relationship to the total ecology of the area.
- E. Fish and Game Management Techniques of management which are important to the area ecosystem.
- F. The Underwater Community. The long-range plan envisions the development of an underwater observatory; this would be a popular attraction which might well be a separate feature. The high construction costs of such an undertaking will undoubtedly be a source of dispute. However, the concept and potential are worthy of future consideration. It is difficult to imagine a more dramatic and exciting way to present the story of the aquatic life in Flathead Lake.

Phase IV

A. Completion of Interior Drive. This phase will complete the circular drive through the park by connecting the previous dead end at Walk-In Camp Number Two with the main entrance. This will allow for unrestricted circulation and eliminate the need to retrace ones steps.

B. Development of Administration Headquarters. A park of this size will require several full time employees during the recreational season. A personnel and administrative area is designated near the entrance and exit, removed from the general activity areas of the park. A separate drive to highway 93 is available for family and personnel use so they will not need to drive through the park to visit nearby communities.

Phase V

A. Development of Picnic Area Number Two and Beach. Instead of encouraging extensive cultural intrusions such as roads, parking lots scooped out of the hillside, and a collection of multicolored vehicle which are not compatible with the lake-forest scenery; the overall plan calls for revising the present area by developing central parking away from the immediate lake shore. The old road and parking area will be reseeded for use as picnicking space. Although such a solution will require a walk of approximately 400 feet, the planner believes that the resulting visitor experience will be more fitting with the mission of the State Park, and more compatible with the natural beauty of the area.

PARK CAPACITY

The proposed development at West Shore State Park is capable of providing excellent outdoor recreational opportunities to the people of Montana and her out-of-state visitors. The entire acreage of the park will be utilized wisely to provide diversified activities for the general public and protection of the resource to safeguard the natural environment which will result in the highest yield of aesthetic satisfaction.

Various agencies have different standards by which park capacities become fixed. Those presented in this report are similar to those established by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. However, they have been modified by the consultant to meet the individual site characteristics of the West Shore area. The suggested densities as represented herein are the maximums in unit per acre figures. The actual circulation patterns and facility design will also influence the unit per acre capacities.

Suggested Density Standards

Picnicking:	0% - 5%	10 units/acre
	5% - 10%	5 units/acre
Trailer Camping:		4 units/acre



Camping Capacities and Quantity Needs

Area Number One Goose Bay Drive-In Tent and Vehicle Camping

- 40 Family Units (including existing development)
- 5 Double Unit Toilets (4 existing)
- 1 Parking spur/family unit (approximately 20% of spurs to be designed to carry two vehicles.)
- 1 Table, 1 Fireplace, 1 Trash Can/Family Unit

Area Number Two Existing Drive-In Camp

- 15 Family Units
- 1 Double Unit Toilet
- 1 Parking Spur/Family Unit
- 1 Table, 1 Fireplace, 1 Trash Can/Family Unit

Area Number Three Travel Trailer Camp

- 20 Trailer Units
- 1 Comfort Station
- 1 Parking Pull-Out/Trailer
(Electrical outlet and water connections available at each unit)
- 1 Trailer Sewage Dump at Entrance and Exit
- 1 Waste Water Pit (not sewage) for every 3 units

Area Number Four Walk-In Tent Camp #1

- 16 Units
- 1 Comfort Station
- 16 Campsites connected to brushed and graded trail system each campsite contains level space for tent, fire place, table and trash can.



Individual Camping

With Roads and Spur Development:	6 units/acre
Walk-In Tent Camping:	6 units/acre
Disbursed Walk-In Camping:	3 units/acre
Parking:	30 spaces/100 persons

Picnicking Capacities and Quantity Needs

Area Number One Boating Site

- 10 Tables
- 6 Fire Grills
- 4 Trash Cans
- 1 Comfort Station (also serves boaters)
- 19 Parking Spaces (additional for 2 vehicle parties)

Area Number Two Lake Front and Beach

- 10 Tables at Lower Elevation
- 10 Tables at Upper Elevation
- 12 Fire Grills
- 1 Group Fire Circle Near Beach
- 8 Trash Cans
- 2 Double Unit Toilets (one upper level, one lower level)
- 1 Combination Shelter and Change House
- 22 Parking Spaces

Total Picnic Capacity 30 units @ 4 person/unit = 120 persons

16 Central Parking Spaces

Area Number Five Walk-In Tent Camp #2

8 Units

1 Double Unit Toilet

8 Central Parking Spaces

Estimated Capacity 100 camp units @ 4 persons/unit = 400 persons

Boat Ramp

1 Ramp, 8 - 12% grade

23 Parking Spaces for Car and Trailer Combinations

1 Dock for Loading and Unloading

Visitor Center

50 Parking Spaces

